

I would like to comment on what I feel is a reduction in service in the public interest that may be attributable in part to the Commission's emphasis on localism, as well as the overly restrictive and protectionist "must-carry" regulations.

I have been a resident of the Grand Junction-Montrose, Colorado DMA since 1995. At that time, the DMA was adequately served by two network affiliate broadcast stations (KREX and KJCT), along with service provided via cable and translators from stations in the neighboring Denver DMA. In 1996, a third affiliate station, NBC affiliate KKCO-TV, went on the air and used must-carry to force the Denver NBC affiliate, KUSA, from the local translators and cable systems. In fairness, I should note that the local cable system does provide newscasts from Denver station KCNC, but no other specialty or regional programming that would be of interest to Grand Junction viewers.

The immediate effect of this was a reduction in service to the viewing public, most notably in the provision of closed-captioning of both locally originating and network programming. That is the first 'casualty' of localism here; the Denver market stations are required to provide real-time closed captioning of local newscasts by virtue of the size of their market and the requirements of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Through the growth of the smaller Grand Junction-Montrose market, made possible in part by the Commission's emphasis on localism, hearing-impaired individuals in the Grand Junction area are now largely restricted to the inferior "electronic newsroom" captioning format provided by the local stations.

Additionally, the Denver market stations also provide more comprehensive coverage of news events and feature programming that is of significant interest to all Coloradans. The growth of our small local market, fueled in part by the localism emphasis, has served to actually provide inferior service in news and other coverage from the local market stations. This fact, combined with the reduction in captioning service, have combined to actually reduce the level and quality of service received by consumers in this DMA.

In short, we were better served by having a mixture of local and regional programming readily available over the air and via cable than we are with all of our "local" programming originating from a closed, protected "market". Former network executive Paul Klein wrote, "In the electronic age it is the television signal, more than arbitrary lines on a map, that define the economic and political cohesiveness of an area". If this has any truth, then the efforts by the Grand Junction-Montrose DMA do nothing but to isolate us and limit or future potential. This applies also to the Satellite Home Viewer Act, which I understand is not administered by FCC, and to the associated effort to provide and restrict satellite TV subscribers to local market channels.

I wouldn't be as concerned about this if the stations in our DMA had some local ownership characteristics. Station KJCT has always been owned by an out-of-town broadcasting company, Pikes Peak Broadcasting in Colorado Springs. However, station KREX, previously

owned by Withers Broadcasting, was sold this year to Hoak Media, and this past week we discovered that KKCO, currently held by local company Eagle III Broadcasting, is being sold to Gray Television of Atlanta, GA. From this vantage point, "localism" is not serving the public interest, and with the final locally-owned commercial broadcast station (TV or Radio) being sold to a non-local company, it seems now that insult is being added to injury.

Thanks very much for your time and consideration.